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June 15, 2017

Marlene H. Dortch, Secretary
Federal Communications Commission
445 Twelfth Street SW
Washington, DC 20554

Re: WC Docket No. 11-42, *Lifeline and Linkup Reform and Modernization*; WC Docket No. 17-108, *Restoring Internet Freedom*; WC Docket No. 16-106, *Protecting the Privacy of Customers of Broadband and Other Telecommunications Services*; WC Docket No. 13-184, *Rates for Interstate Inmate Calling Services*

Dear Ms. Dortch:

On Tuesday, June 13th, the Voices for Internet Freedom Coalition — made up of the Center for Media Justice, Color of Change, Free Press and the National Hispanic Media Coalition, along with 18 Million Rising and Common Cause, hosted “#InternetIRL” - a public forum on the intersection between internet freedom and black opportunity with Commissioner Clyburn. The forum took place at The Gathering Spot, 384 Northyards Boulevard Northwest, Building 100 Atlanta, GA.

A full Facebook Live recording is available at
<https://www.facebook.com/centerformediajustice/>.

Joseph Torres began the event speaking about how important radio, television, and modern communications networks like the internet have been for the civil rights movement and modern movements in the fight for equity and civil rights.

Color Of Change Executive Director Rashad Robinson then spoke about the connection between Net Neutrality and racial justice. He went on to remark that the open internet allows people of color to be heard and be counted.

He then introduced Commissioner Clyburn who spoke about the importance of serving our neighbors and how important affordable broadband access and the open internet is to communities of color. She also implored the audience to submit comments and call their members of Congress to protect Net Neutrality.

Following the Commissioner' remarks, Robinson was joined on stage by Lucy McBath, national spokeswoman for Moms Demand Action for Gun Sense in America and the mother of Jordan Davis. In 2013, a White man shot and killed Jordan at a Florida gas station during an argument over loud music. Jordan was just 17.

Next, Free Press' Collette Watson moderated a panel featuring three powerful Black woman organizers. Poor People's Campaign technologist and Black Girls Code co-founder Idalin Bobe talked about the ways in which the latter has not only opened doors but also literally changed the online conversation: Google searches for "Black girls" once returned auto-complete terms like "dumb" and "ugly." Now "Black Girls Code" is consistently in the top-three search results.

Charis Goff, vice president of National Urban League Young Professionals, talked about the ways that her organization's members use the open internet to access opportunity. With many professional conferences and training courses charging exorbitant registration fees, livestreaming makes it possible for aspiring professionals to access these critical resources remotely at reduced or no cost.

Women's March on Washington co-organizer Nantasha Washington talked about the online tools that planners used in the build-up to her group's historic event. Everything from anticipating head count to mobilizing global satellite marches depended on organizers' ability to gather data and share real-time messaging via digital platforms.

Color Of Change Senior Campaign Manager Anika Navaroli took the stage next to lead a discussion about the many daily life and work experiences carried out on the internet — from the Black-professional advocacy of the Gathering Spot founder Ryan Wilson to the journalism-activism of All Digitocracy founder Tracie Powell to the advocacy work of Planned Parenthood Vice President Nikema Williams. Panelist Devan Demarcus discussed the hypermasculine and hypersexual stereotypes often assigned to Black men and boys, which inspired him to create the online campaign #BlackMenSmile.

Panelist Morgan Scott Smith described the high cost and rampant profiteering involved in email and phone communications with individuals who, like her spouse, are incarcerated. This conversation was particularly timely as an appeals court had ruled earlier in the day that the FCC could [no longer limit the cost of prison-phone services](#). Morgan explained that this change will most impact poor families and people of color, who are far more likely to be incarcerated — and far less likely to have funds available for bail fees, legal defenses, prison-communication charges, and the many other costs embedded in interactions with the legal system.

The elimination of FCC rules limiting the cost of prison-phone calls comes thanks to FCC Chairman Ajit Pai's refusal to defend the agency's limits in the face of a lawsuit from the prison-phone industry. Donald Trump appointed Pai earlier this year.

The fourth and final #InternetIRL conversation ended the event on a lighter note. *Queen Sugar* star Reagan Gomez-Preston and BET late-night host Robin Thede brought "Hollywood" to Atlanta with their takes on using Twitter and other platforms to connect with and expand their audiences.

Blavity.com co-founder Jonathan Jackson discussed the site's mission of providing a "digital lunch table" as a safe gathering space for Black millennials. And famed BuzzFeed journalist Sylvia Obell talked about her mission to tell stories of Black life with the nuance and context that's often missing in coverage.

Between each segment, video screens displayed testimonials from everyday Atlantans describing the power of the internet in their lives. One young musician talked about his hip-hop record label, and his belief in "free Wi-Fi for all."

Audience members also wrote comment cards directed to Commissioner Clyburn and the FCC. Commenters asked the Commissioner how they can protect their internet privacy and noted the huge stake the black community has in a free and open internet.

We submit this ex-parte notice in accordance with Section 1.1206(b) of the Commission's rules.

Respectfully submitted,

Collette Watson
Joseph Torres
Jessica J. González
Free Press